

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KINGST 03381 242020Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 FEA-01 INT-05
OES-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /086 W
-----079638 250137Z /73

R 241900Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5978
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 3381

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, JM
SUBJECT: REFINERY STRIKE THREATENS ECONOMY, EMBARRASSES RULING PARTY

1. TECHNICAL STAFF AT THE ESSO REFINERY, WHO ARE REPRESENTED BY THE NATIONAL WORKERS UNION (NWU), WENT ON STRIKE ON JUNE 13. THE STRIKE DID LITTLE TO AFFECT THE FUNCTIONING OF THE REFINERY SINCE SUPERVISORY STAFF WERE ABLE TO MAINTAIN OPERATIONS. HOWEVER, ON JUNE 21 THE STRIKE TOOK A MORE SERIOUS TURN WHEN PICKET LINES WERE ESTABLISHED AND GASOLINE TANK TRUCK DRIVERS, WHO ARE ALSO REPRESENTED BY THE NWU, REFUSED TO ENTER THE REFINERY. THE INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES TRIBUNAL ORDERED THE STRIKING TECHNICAL STAFF MEMBERS TO RETURN TO WORK. THIS THEY REFUSED TO DO AND THE JAMAICA DEFENSE FORCE (JDF) WAS PLACED ON ALERT YESTERDAY (JUNE 23) TO BE READY TO MOVE PETROLEUM SUPPLIES TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES -- I.E., HOSPITALS, THE FIRE BRIGADE, THE POLICE, PRISONS AND JDF INSTALLATIONS -- IF NEED BE. THE STRIKING WORKERS AND THEIR TANK TRUCK DRIVING ALLIES HAVE AGREED TO PERMIT THESE LIMITED MOVEMENTS. AS OF MIDDAY, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 KINGST 03381 242020Z

JUNE 24, THERE ARE LONG LINES AT THOSE GASOLINE STATIONS WHICH ARE STILL OPEN, AND PURCHASES HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO FIVE GALLONS. UNLESS THE STRIKE IS SOON SETTLED, JAMAICA'S ROADS WILL RAPIDLY EMPTY OF TRUCKS, BUSES AND CARS.

2. THE STRIKE THREATENS TO CRIPPLE THE JAMAICAN ECONOMY UNLESS IT IS QUICKLY RESOLVED. AT ISSUE APPEAR TO BE DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS OF AN AWARD GIVEN BY A SPECIAL LABOR TRIBUNAL REGARDING PAY FOR WORK PERFORMED ON SUNDAYS; THE ISSUE SEEMS TO BE VERY TECHNICAL AND EVEN LABOR MINISTRY CONTACTS BEGIN TO FALTER AS THEY ENDEAVOR TO EXPLAIN THE INTRICACIES. HOWEVER, THE DIFFERENCES OVER THE SUNDAY PAY FORMULA MAY SIMPLY HAVE ORTKRED THE NWU AN OPPORTUNITY TO CALL A STRIKE IN A KEY AREA OF THE ECONOMY FOR ITS OWN ENDS. THERE IS SOUND REASON TO THINK THAT THE NWU IS AN INTERESTED IN FLEXING ITS MUSCLES AS IT IS IN PROMOTING THE CAUSE OF ONE OF ITS UNITS. AS REPORTED IN KINGSTON'S A-49 OF JUNE 24, THE UNION HAS ALREADY SOUGHT TO MAKE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT IT WISHES TO DISTANCE ITSELF FROM THE RULING PEOPLES NATIONAL PARTY (PNP), HAVING CONCLUDED THAT IT IS GOVERNING JAMAICA VERY POORLY. THIS DECISION WAS CLEARLY TAKEN RELUCTANTLY, GIVEN THE FACT THAT THE PNP EMERGED FROM THE NWU AND THAT PRIME MINISTER MANLEY WAS LONG ONE OF UNION'S

LEADERS. WE THINK THAT PART OF THE NWU'S WILLINGNESS TO TAKE ON THE GOVERNMENT REFLECTS ITS CONCLUSION THAT THE PROPOSED "WORKER PARTICIPATION" PROGRAM UNDER WHICH WORKER REPRESENTATIVES WILL SIT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 KINGST 03381 242020Z

ON COMPANY BOARDS THREATENS THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF THE UNIONS AS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGENTS. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS EQUALLY AS LIKELY THAT THE NWU HAS SIMPLY CONCLUDED THAT THE PNP, BASED ON ITS RECORD TO DATE, IS ILL-FITTED TO GOVERN, AND IT WISHES TO MOVE AS FAR FROM THE RULING PARTY AS IT CAN LEST IT (THE NWU) BE TARRED BY THE PNP'S FAILURES. THE UNION WOULD SEEM TO HAVE HAD A MEASURE OF SUCCESS IN SEPARATING ITSELF FROM THE PNP. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE, MOBILIZATION MINISTER D.K. DUNCAN, WHO IS ALSO THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE PNP, HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN ABUSING THE NWU IN HIS PUBLIC SPEECHES AND ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION HAS CHARACTERIZED ITS ACTIONS AS "TREASON".

DORRANCE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PETROLEUM INDUSTRY, UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, LABOR STRIKES, REFINERIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-Jun-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KINGST03381
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770227-0703
Format: TEL
From: KINGSTON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770620/aaaaargi.tel
Line Count: 108
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f94f0477-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 23-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2038904
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: REFINERY STRIKE THREATENS ECONOMY, EMBARRASSES RULING PARTY
TAGS: PINT, PINS, ELAB, ENRG, JM, NWU, NATIONAL WORKERS UNION
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f94f0477-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009